

'Sounds of science'
in Pulaski County

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Four Kentucky schools receive NCLB Blue Ribbon honors

By Joy Barr
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Four Kentucky public schools recently were named 2004 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Blue Ribbon Schools. Central Elementary in Johnson County, Morgantown Elementary in Butler County, Sacramento Elementary in McLean County and West Louisville Elementary in Daviess County received the designation. Two private schools in Jefferson County also were honored.

The NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools program honors public and private K-12 schools that are academically superior in their states or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

The program requires schools to meet either of two assessment criteria. It recognizes schools with at least 40 per-

cent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds and that dramatically improve student performance in reading and mathematics in accordance with state assessment systems; and it rewards schools that score in the top 10 percent statewide in reading and mathematics on state assessments.

Morgantown and Sacramento elementaries were recognized for achievements in the first category, and Central and West Louisville elementaries for achievements in the second category. The principals and other representatives from each school attended a recognition ceremony in Washington, D.C., last November.

This is the second year for schools to be honored under the NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools program. Out of 150,000 public and private schools in the United

States, only slightly more than 250 schools (205 public and 50 private) received the Blue Ribbon designation.

The goal of NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools is to promote and support the improvement of education in America by identifying schools throughout the country whose programs and services other schools can model.

Kentucky's NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools have excelled in many ways. Each school is making significant progress on their accountability indices of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS).

High test scores at these elementary schools are the result of teamwork on the part of students, principals, teachers, staff, parents and community leaders. Positive and encouraging faculty relationships with students

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Four Kentucky elementary schools are proudly displaying this banner after being designated a 2004 NCLB Blue Ribbon School.

Photo by Rick McComb

Board continues review of writing assessment

By Cathy Lindsey
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During the past year, the Kentucky Board of Education has focused on writing assessments and on specific issues related to the instructional time spent on portfolios, portfolio connections to P-16 transition, and resolving differences in teacher-produced scores and audited scoring.

At its January meeting, the board continued its work on writing assessments.

The board reviewed information gathered by the Kentucky Department of Education through a writing focus group and an online survey of teachers, administrators and post-secondary educators. With guidance from members of the National Technical Advisory Panel for Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA), the board agreed on some major points. The consensus of the board is that Kentucky should:

- Maintain a portfolio of writing over time, an on-demand writing assessment and a multiple-choice assessment for both assessment and accountability purposes.
- Spread writing responsibility across more grade levels.
- Expand the performance levels for writing to more align with other content areas and give credit for student progress within a performance level.
- Broaden the breadth of categories for the collection of writing portfolio entries to increase student choice on purpose, audience and form. This includes providing more opportunities for analytical, technical and workplace writing at the high school level, including entries that are connected to student interest and a student's Individual Graduation Plan, and requiring analytical writing.
- Assess the conventions of writing in a visible manner as part of the state test.
- Include students responding to text as part of the on-demand writing component and broaden the categories for the prompts to better align with the collection of the writing portfolio categories.
- Maintain the current overall weight for writing but consider decreasing the weight of portfolio writing.

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Students become literacy partners

Nearly 50,000 middle and high school students across Kentucky are wearing a new label this school year. They're not just honor roll students, athletes, band members, big brothers, older sisters or neighbors.

Because of their work with a new student-led statewide literacy project, their peers and other students in their school districts are recognizing them as "life-

long readers."

Last summer, student members of Kentucky's Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO), the Future Educators of America (FEA) and Kentucky's Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) joined with several state education agencies to create the statewide Unite to Read project. The state agencies are the Ken-

tucky Department of Education's Division of Career and Technical Education and the Department for Workforce Investment's Office of Career and Technical Education.

The Unite to Read project promotes literacy and lifelong reading among students at all grade levels.

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Bulletin Board



Photo by Rick McComb

Events

Read Across America

Read Across America, a nationwide initiative that promotes reading every day of the year, will be celebrated March 2. Free resource materials are available for teachers on the National Education Association's Web site.
www.nea.org/readacross/

Year of Languages

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the U.S. Senate have declared 2005 as The Year of Languages. Americans are encouraged to develop proficiency not only in English but in other languages.
www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1

Photo-essay contest

Kentucky students at all grade levels may enter "Old Buildings = New Opportunities," a photo and essay competition sponsored by the Kentucky Heritage Council and Preservation Kentucky Inc. Essays must be postmarked by March 31.
Contact: Becky Shipp, (502) 564-7005; Becky.Shipp@ky.gov
www.preservationkentucky.org/news/PK_2005_Essays/index.html

Excellence in mathematics and science teaching

Know a great mathematics or science teacher in grades 7-12? Nominate him or her to receive presidential recognition. The 2005 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are sponsored by the White House and administered by the National Science Foundation. State-level winners in each content area receive a \$10,000 award and a paid trip for two to Washington, D.C. Nominated teachers must submit completed application materials by May 2.
Contact: Kentucky Department of Education mathematics consultant Ann Bartosh or science consul-

tant Jackie Hensley at (502) 564-2106, or by e-mail at abartosh@kde.state.ky.us or jhensley@kde.state.ky.us
www.paemst.org/

Thoroughbred Center productions

The Thoroughbred Center in Lexington has several upcoming productions that are appropriate for school field trips. Performances are at 10 a.m. and noon.
"Emperor's New Clothes" is a musical adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's story about an emperor whose only worry in life is to dress in elegant clothing. His vanity causes him to get tricked into buying invisible clothing. Performances are March 10-11.
"Buffalo Soldier" is a dramatic play that tells the story of the brave African-American soldiers who served in the 9th and 10th cavalries for the Union Army. Performances are March 30-31.
Contact: Box Office, (859) 293-1853
www.thethoroughbredcenter.com/theatre/schedule.asp

Arts showcases

The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts will host artists and exhibitors from across the country at its annual Arts Education Showcases in March. The one-day events, held at locations around the state, will familiarize Kentucky educators with performing artists, visual artists, arts organizations and cultural institutions that are available as resources for their schools.
Showcases are scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at:

- Louisville, March 2
- Owensboro, March 3
- Bowling Green, March 11
- Lexington, March 15
- Whitesburg, March 16
- Ashland, March 22

Contact: Jeffrey Jamner, (502) 562-0703; jjamner@kentuckycenter.org
www.kentuckycenter.org/education/artseducation.asp

Resources

Online civil rights interviews

In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Kentucky Oral History Commission launched its new civil rights movement online database on Jan. 12. Online access to Kentucky's largest collection of civil rights interviews offers audio and video interviews, plus more than 10,000 pages of electronic oral history transcriptions. All material is full-text searchable and can be sorted by county, subject or decade.
The online collection is part of a continuing oral history project that includes the award-winning video documentary, "Living the Story: The Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky" and related lesson plans.
To access the new online database, visit <http://history.ky.gov>. For more information, contact Doug Boyd at (502) 564-1792 or by e-mail at doug.boyd@ky.gov.

Student essay competition

The National D-Day Museum is sponsoring an essay competition for high school students. Students must submit a 1,000-word essay on "Why should we study WWII history?" First-place winners will receive \$500; second-place, \$250; and third-place, \$100. Teachers of winning students will receive a selection of WWII books and teaching materials. Deadline for submitting essays is March 31.
www.ddaymuseum.org/studentessays.html

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr
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Commissioner's Comments

Augmented NCLB assessments will be field tested in March

By Gene Wilhoit
gwillhoit@kde.state.ky.us

Our offices have been getting a lot of questions during the past few weeks about the Kentucky Core Content Spring 2005 Field Test. What is it? Who will take the tests? What do schools need to do?

This field test should not be confused with the tests administered each spring as part of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). Rather, this field test will provide test items for the assessments Kentucky students will take beginning in spring 2006 to help Kentucky meet the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requirements.

As you may recall, the 2001 federal education law requires states to test students in grades 3 (end of primary) through 8 each year in reading and mathematics beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. Kentucky elementary and middle school students currently take state assessments in reading in grades 4 and 7, and in mathematics in grades 5 and 8.

The Kentucky Board of Education decided in 2003 to meet the federal testing requirement by purchasing a form of the Terra Nova assessment from our testing contractor CTB McGraw-Hill. The test will be similar to the norm-referenced test used as part of CATS at the end of primary, grade 6 and grade 9. To guarantee the purchased tests adequately assess Kentucky Core Content, the board required adding multiple-choice and two open-response questions to the test at each grade level.

Now, we must conduct a field test of the potential test items before we use them to meet the NCLB requirements. Scores from the field test will not be reported and will not be used for the 2005 NCLB Average Yearly progress reporting.

Conducting a field test of potential test items is nothing new in Kentucky. We routinely embed non-counting field test items in our state assessments prior to including them in CATS reporting. However, since this is an entirely new battery of tests, more people are aware that the field test is being conducted.

Who takes the tests?

We have selected schools for the field test that will provide a valid sample of students from the end of primary through grade 8. In some districts, several classrooms in one or more grades will participate. In other districts, only one school or a few classrooms will be part of the field test. Some districts will not participate in the field test at all. (See chart on this page for grades and content areas involved in the field test.)

This table shows the content areas and grade levels that will be tested during the Kentucky Core Content Spring 2005 Field Test.

The field test period is March 7-18. By now, district assessment coordinators should have notified participating schools and classrooms. If you have questions about whether or not your school is participating, contact your district assessment coordinator.

As I mentioned, the field test assessment is a form of the Comprehensive



Commissioner Wilhoit

Test of Basic Skills (CTBS/5) we've administered in the past to students each year in grades 3, 6 and 9 as part of CATS. The first two parts of the test contain multiple-choice grade-appropriate questions on content. Students have a set time to complete the first two parts.

The third part of the test — the Kentucky-designed multiple-choice and open-response questions — will be administered like the Kentucky Core Content Tests. Students may have extended time to complete answers on this part, if needed.

Beginning in spring 2006, items from all three parts of the assessment will be used for the NCLB report. We must report the percentage of students testing at proficient or above in reading and mathematics to the federal government. Because some items from the first two parts (CTBS/5) and all items from the third part of the assessment are oriented to Kentucky standards, we can assign a novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished performance level to a score.

This additional testing at the elementary and middle levels will take between 90 minutes and two hours per content area to administer. However, the tests will provide something that educators have been wanting for a long time: longitudinal data.

By testing the same students in these two subject areas over consecutive years, Kentucky will be able to track a student's proficiency over time. The data we will begin collecting next school year about students will help inform teaching and learning, as well as guide school improvement efforts, for years to come.

What do schools do?

Schools participating in the field test will use the same security protocols for the field tests as are used for the spring CATS assessments. As with any other assessment, they should remind students to get plenty of sleep, eat breakfast and do their best on the tests.

In the long-term, all schools should be preparing for next spring when we begin assessing all students in grades 3-8 annually in reading and mathematics for NCLB purposes. Schools will need to look closely to

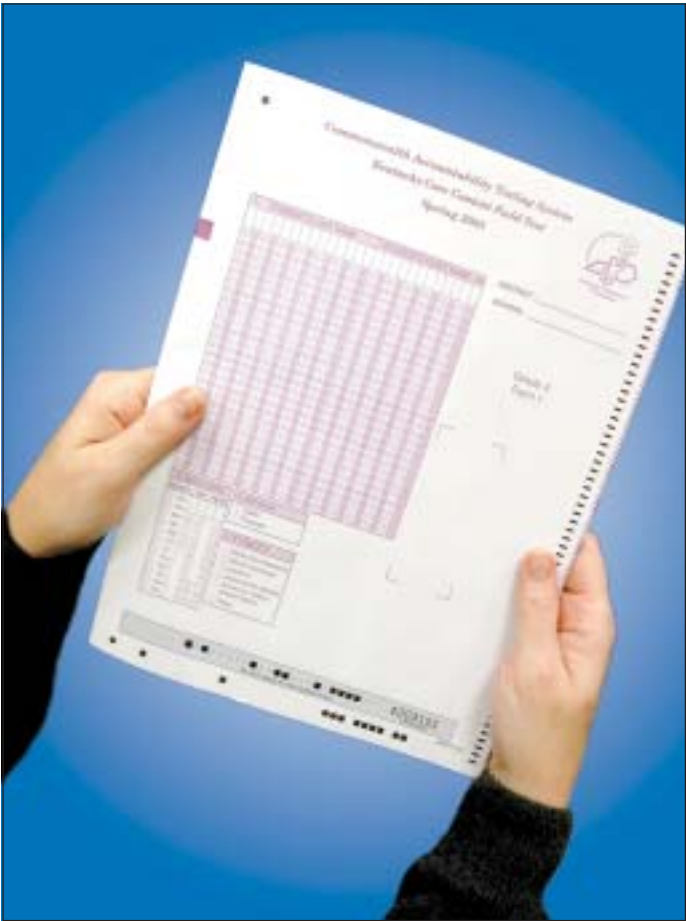


Photo by Rick McComb

Selected classrooms throughout Kentucky will participate in the Kentucky Core Content Spring 2005 Field Test March 7-18 to provide test items for the assessments Kentucky students will take beginning in spring 2006 to help Kentucky meet the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requirements.

make certain their curriculum addresses reading and mathematics core content in every year at the elementary and middle school levels.

It will become most important for students in grades 3-8 to have exposure to quality grade-appropriate and age-appropriate reading and mathematics experiences.

In addition, teachers will want to give students in all grades practice in answering multiple-choice and open-response questions in reading and mathematics. Taking the new, augmented tests will be a new experience for end-of-primary students. This is the first time they will be called upon during a state assessment to answer open-response questions. They will need practice.

I appreciate the schools that have agreed to participate in this important field test. I know it is not easy to conduct additional spring testing.

However, the benefits greatly outweigh the extra work. Kentucky will meet the federal requirements by creating another valid and reliable series of tests that can measure the performance and achievement of its public school students.

Your work this spring will help provide data to show Kentuckians that all public schools are accountable for teaching and learning, and that schools in all 176 districts are working to meet the federal and state goals of proficiency — and beyond — by 2014.

To comment on this topic, e-mail the commissioner at gwillhoit@kde.state.ky.us.

Spring 2005 Field Test						
Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8
Reading and Language Arts	X		X	X		X
Mathematics	X	X		X	X	

This table shows the content areas and grade levels that will be tested during the Kentucky Core Content Spring 2005 Field Test.

Laurel County students get a second chance at diplomas

By Cathy Lindsey
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In a perfect world, we would get everything right the first time. In the real world, we sometimes need second chances to keep us on the right path.

Understanding this need, school administrators in Laurel County saw fit to create a computer lab credit recovery program for high school students who have fallen behind in their classes. The district purchased the hardware and software to provide all core content classes and a majority of elective classes through computer labs at both of the high schools in the district.

Students also have the benefit of additional instruction in the content areas in which they are having difficulty. Teachers provide direct instruction to students while they complete assignments in the computer lab.

“Many times this type of recovery gives the students the encouragement they need and helps them gain the skills they once lacked so that they are able to be successful in the classroom setting once again,” said Kerri Greene, credit recovery program coordinator at South Laurel High School.

Before beginning the program, students take pretests to determine what content they still must master before they can receive credit for the course. Laurel County uses the PLATO learning software that tracks each student’s progress in modules of each course the student is attempting to recover.

To receive credit, a student must pass 100 percent of the modules with 80 percent mastery. In addition to the computer work, students must complete any major requirements associated with the course such as portfolio pieces or research papers.

At South Laurel High School, students are allowed to work in the computer lab on their modules for credit recovery before and after school. The lab also is open during school breaks and summer vacation so that students may work at their own pace, as little or as much as they are able.

“The program is beneficial to students because it allows flexibility in scheduling and a more radical recovery than the single-course-per-summer option of a typical recovery program,” said Greene. “This flexibility permits the students to rejoin their age-group graduation class.”

More than 160 students have earned credits through the credit recovery program at South Laurel High since its inception in October 2003. These students have earned a total of 241 credits. Currently, there are another 127 students working in the program.

The modules are aligned with Kentucky Core Content, so students who have failed a class are reintroduced to core content material. Greene hopes this will increase the likelihood that these students will perform more successfully on year-end state assessments.

At South Laurel, teachers maintain the lab on a random schedule. Mark Felts, choral music director, works in the lab once a week for a six-hour shift and every morn-



Photo by Rick McComb

Teacher Mark Felts helps Kelli Jo Stewart as she works in the South Laurel High School credit recovery computer lab to answer an Integrated Science II question about the impact people have on the environment.

ing before school.

“It’s been a good opportunity,” Felts said. “There is an excitement and new energy about recovering credits. Students have been self-motivated.”

Greene, the program’s coordinator, said an added bonus of the program is the improving relationships between teachers and students. “The opportunity for one-on-one assistance is an excellent way to fortify the students’ perception of school,” she said.

At South Laurel, the lab also is open during school hours. Classroom teachers often use the software in pretests and posttests or to re-teach a specific skill. This provides the teachers another avenue of introducing information to students, Greene said.

The PLATO software also is useful to visual/kinesthetic learners because it permits them to learn in their most successful atmosphere, Greene explained. Most of the modules also possess audio ability so that students with poor reading skills can use a reader unobtrusively and have the ability to repeat anything they need to hear again.

Laurel County administrators consider this program a positive alternative for struggling students. Last year, 44 Laurel County students who would have otherwise dropped out of school were able to complete their graduation requirements due to their involvement in the program. They graduated in the spring and summer of 2004 because of the credit recovery program.

In fact, Greene described one student

who was behind in his coursework. His class had graduated the previous year, but he had been unable to complete enough credits in the traditional summer program to receive a diploma.

The student was the primary wage earner for his household. While he was already participating in a cooperative program that allowed him to spend a half-day at school and a half-day at work, his circumstances called for him to be in the workforce full-time. Instead of dropping out of school, this student was able to complete the needed course work for graduation in credit recovery, while still fulfilling his need to work full-time.


North Laurel High School, also in the Laurel County district, provides a computer lab for credit recovery. Scheduled by sub-

ject, students can sign up to attend the lab and may use that time to apply the PLATO software to complete their needed modules. Eighty-seven students have recovered credits, thus far, at North Laurel.

Kim Brown, director of instruction for Laurel County schools, hopes to expand this program to include a credit recovery laboratory at each of the district’s middle schools.

“If we can get them all coming in on track as 9th graders,” Brown said, “I believe both high schools are going to soar.”

For more information, contact Kerri Greene at kerrigreene@laurel.k12.ky.us or (606) 862-4727, or Kim Brown at kbrown@laurel.k12.ky.us or (606) 862-4600.



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Fax: (502) 564-6470

Write: Kentucky Teacher
1914 Capital Plaza Tower
500 Mero St.
Frankfort, KY 40601

Symsonia students observe life from a different perspective

By Paul Schaumburg
Graves County Schools

“The only way people have empathy is through actual experience,” said Sherri Wirt. “Many people think they’re sympathetic toward someone with a special need. Many times those people don’t really understand special needs at all.”



Symsonia Elementary student T.J. Holder, left, served as guide for blindfolded classmate Reed Grimes during the “Blind Writers Project.”

Photo by Paul Schaumburg, Graves County Schools

That observation — combined with a need to teach a specific aspect of writing — prompted Wirt, a Symsonia Elementary School instructional assistant, to create the “Blind Writers Project.” The project has two purposes: to increase students’ awareness of special needs and develop their skills of descriptive writing.

“We are constantly trying to get the children to think in details when they write,” Wirt explained. “I’ve often found myself saying, ‘Describe it to me like I’ve never seen it before.’”

The project gave several students the opportunity to experience first hand a day in the life of a blind student. Fourth graders then used the students’ experiences and observations to write a feature article about what their school should do to be more accommodating to blind and visually impaired students.

Four 4th-grade students were blindfolded for the entire school day. They each had a guide to assist them in classroom activities, as well as help them maneuver school hallways.

Lunch in the cafeteria proved a challenge for Jade Thompson, one of the blindfolded students. Her guide, Alex McGregor, required help carrying two lunch trays, and it took Jade several attempts before she could access her meal account at the cashier’s station, she said.

“I’ve had to explain to Jade a lot today. You can’t just say, turn, you have to tell them which way,” Alex said, “and you have to tell them things like colors and sizes.”

The experience made an impression on Jade. “I have a lot more respect for blind people because I know what it’s like for them,” she said.

“If someone did come to our school that was blind, it makes me happy to know that they can get around,” said Alex. “At least they don’t have to just sit somewhere. They can get involved.”

Ron Philpot, a teacher of the blind/visually impaired and a certified orientation and mobility specialist, visited the school the day of the project. He is

one of eight teachers of the blind/visually impaired serving approximately 125 blind and low-vision students in the 28 member districts of the West Kentucky Educational Cooperative. “Today’s program at Symsonia is unique in my experience. It’s a good project,” he said.

While at the school, Philpot talked with the 4th graders, giving them the perspective of special needs students he has known. “When you encounter people who are visually impaired, it is important to be descriptive in your conversation with them,” he explained. “The students I have encountered aren’t offended by the word blind. What’s much more important is accepting who they are.

“I think for these 4th graders, this is a good age to teach them sensitivity toward others because they are beginning to form their own opinions,” Philpot said.

Contact: Sherri Wirt at (270) 647-4860 or by e-mail at swirt@graves.k12.ky.us

(Paul Schaumburg is community relations director for Graves County Schools.)

Accountants offer financial and career support to schools

Do you need additional funding for high school accounting projects? Do your accounting students need help funding college? Look no further than the Kentucky Society of Certified Public Accountants (KSCPA).

The KSCPA offers educator grants to purchase classroom resource materials. In addition, the organization awards scholarships to high school seniors and selects high school students to participate in a summer career learning experience.

High school educators can apply for KSCPA grants of up to \$500 to fund programs designed to promote educational excellence and relevance by connecting students in the classroom with the real world of business.

These grants should be used to develop and implement new and innovative learning opportunities that:

- Integrate accounting and business in the classroom
- Support instruction and Kentucky content standards
- Provide replicable models of best practices

- Improve student achievement and learning

Graduating seniors who have an interest in accounting and plan to attend a Kentucky college or university may qualify for the KSCPA’s \$500 scholarships. For more information or to download a scholarship application, go to the KSCPA’s education Web site, www.cpa2be.org. The application deadline is March 1.

Each summer, KSCPA offers a free campus residency program for high school juniors and seniors who are interested in learning more about the opportunities in business and accounting. BASE Camp (Business & Accounting Summer Education Camp) is a weeklong program held in Louisville designed to help students develop skills and explore their opportunities in business and accounting.

For more information about these and other KSCPA education programs, visit the KSCPA’s education Web site, www.cpa2be.org, and click on “Educators,” or call Jenni Buckner, KSCPA marketing and education coordinator, toll-free at (800) 292-1754.

Teachers will tour energy sites during summer conference

When Tandy Wellman returned to Poage Elementary School (Ashland Independent) this fall, she had an armload of curriculum and many new ideas for enhancing the study of energy for her 5th-grade students.

Paula Davis had new information on nuclear energy she planned to use in her chemistry unit on radioactivity at Lloyd High School (Erlanger Independent).

Candice Heinze had new ideas and activities to help her cover core content on electricity with her 4th-grade students at Stephens Elementary in Boone County.

These teachers from different Kentucky school districts participated in the Kentucky NEED Energy Conference for Educators (ECE) last summer to learn more about energy and how to connect it to their classroom content instruction. They also received grade-appropriate curriculum, free use of a NEED (National Emergency Education Development) hands-on science kit and the training to use these resources in their classrooms.

Each summer, the Kentucky NEED Project advances energy education in classrooms across the state by taking 25 teachers on a five-day tour of energy sites in Kentucky. The Kentucky Division of Energy, the Kentucky Coal Council, Kentucky Power and Equitable Resources underwrite expenses for the weeklong conference tour.

Kentucky NEED will host the 2005 Energy Conference for Educators June

13-17 in western Kentucky. Participants will tour many sites, including a coal mine, an ethanol plant and a hydropower dam. Teachers also will meet with area energy professionals.

This school year, Wellman incorporated the materials and training provided by Kentucky NEED to:

- Train her 5th graders to conduct energy experiments for students in the lower grades
- Organize a school energy fair
- Apply for and receive a grant that provides her school with a 1kW solar panel
- Connect concepts from the school’s geothermal heating/ventilation/air conditioning system to her energy curriculum
- Work with the school’s Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) director to create a computer demonstration of “Energy Jeopardy” that the students entered in a regional STLP competition

Heinze is using the NEED curriculum this year with her elementary students. “They love reading about energy and love the activities in the program,” she said. “They use the materials independently with teacher guidance. This fosters so much student-directed learning.”

To request an application for the 2005 energy conference, contact Karen Reagor, executive director of the Kentucky NEED project, by e-mail at kreagor@need.org or call toll free at (866) 736-8941. Registration deadline is April 15. The conference is limited to 25 teachers.

KASA sponsors writing contest

The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) is again seeking participants for its “Profiles of Courage” writing contest. The contest encourages students in grades K-12 to write about a teacher or an adult mentor/role model in a public school who has inspired them to take brave steps in believing in themselves and achieving at higher levels.

The contest is designed to complement writing portfolios, giving students a real audience and purpose for writing.

Contest winners will receive \$100 gift certificates, an invitation to read their essays at KASA’s 36th annual conference (July 13-15 in Louisville), overnight accommodations at the conference hotel and a certificate of excellence. The contest is sponsored by A+ Auto & Home Insurance Plus.

For complete information about the contest guidelines, visit KASA’s Web site at www.kasa.org. Deadline for entries is March 1.

At Lost River Elementary

Power of teachers and students equals success for all

By Don Sergent
Warren County Schools

When Brayan Pena moved to Warren County from El Salvador in 1998, adjusting to school was predictably difficult. His parents enrolled him in a local private school and then briefly in a public school before intentionally moving their family in 2003 so Brayan could attend Lost River Elementary School.

For Pena, now 12, the move was a god-send.

"Lost River is a special place," says Pena, his brown eyes lighting up as he warms to the subject. "I had a cousin go here, and he had a good experience. My parents thought it would be a good place. They have been happy. I have learned more here than I did in the other schools."

Need evidence? You need look no further than Pena's scores on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) academic assessment. Last year, as a 5th grader, he scored in the distinguished level in three subjects.

As an immigrant who had limited English skills when he moved to Warren County, Pena doesn't fit the profile of a high-achieving student. Maybe that's why Lost River appeals to him.

At first glance, Lost River Elementary would seem to have at least two strikes against it. The school is located in the shadow of industrial sites, not among high-priced residential real estate.

The school of more than 600 students is home to 86 English as a Second Language (ESL) students representing 10 different languages. Poverty is a concern too; nearly 60 percent of the school's students qualify for the free-or reduced-price lunch program.

Not a problem, says an involved parent who is as happy with Lost River as Pena is. "As soon as those students hit the doors, they are all equal in that school," says Lora Wathen, mother of a Lost River 5th grader. "The staff expects the best out of each and every child. It's just a good atmosphere — and it works."

Yes, it does. Lost River has seen steady growth in its CATS scores and steady shrinkage in the achievement gaps for low-income and ESL students. This year, it has the highest accountability index (95.6) of Warren County's 18 schools. In a school system ranked among the top 15 percent of Kentucky districts, that's an accomplishment.

It may be a surprise to many, but not to the man running the school. Lost River Principal Mike Stevenson expects high achievement from Lost River's students, and he has a plan to coax their best out of them.

"First, we convince kids that we care about them," he says. "Then we convince them that they can do what we want them to do. When you do those two things and



Photo by Rick McComb

Teacher Cassandra M. Jones works with 4th grader Melvin Alfaro on a science lesson about minerals. Jones says teachers at Lost River Elementary are excited about helping the school's diverse student population excel at high levels.

your teachers are on board, good things happen."

Stevenson, a former physical education teacher in his 5th year as Lost River's principal, is on the front lines in convincing students that teachers and staff care about them. He can be seen in the hallways, calling students by name, joking with them and encouraging them. He goes out of his way to see that students are rewarded for good behavior and academic success, to the point of helping organize a trip to the Cincinnati area for this year's high achievers on the CATS assessment.

He also finds extraordinary ways to reward teachers, even working with Lost River's school based decision making council to organize a celebration to honor teachers shortly after the 2004 CATS scores were released.

"I tell our teachers that they have the most honorable job in the world," Stevenson says. "They're the ones on a pedestal in this school."

Deflecting praise from himself to the teachers is Stevenson's style, but many of his teachers are quick to deflect it right back to the principal's desk.

"The teachers here have bought into the idea that every child can learn," says Diane Kayser, a primary teacher at Lost River. "Mr. Stevenson has been a big part of that. He has brought the faculty

together. He puts a lot of importance on teachers. He has made us feel that we are the most important people in the world."

"Mr. Stevenson is very positive and very visible in the school," echoes 4th-grade teacher Cassandra Jones. "He gets us motivated to do well. He's as excited as we are about kids excelling."

That may explain why both Jones and Kayser are willing to put forth extra effort — even staying after hours to help struggling students. Other Lost River teachers have the confidence to try strategies Stevenson refers to as "outside the box" methods, organizing hands-on learning activities such as Pioneer Day and investing in a keyboard lab for music instruction.

Jones sums up the Lost River learning climate this way: "We're always looking for new strategies, new ways of teaching. I ask myself, 'What would I want someone to do for my child?' I believe the other teachers feel the same way."

The culture of high expectations at Lost River has resulted in more than stratospheric CATS scores. The school is getting attention from around the state. The Lexington-based Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence chose Lost River for a study of eight high-performing, low-income Kentucky schools. Other school districts have visited Lost River or asked

Stevenson to visit their districts to share his success story.

The Lost River principal has made presentations at three different faculty meetings in the Allen County school district. "Mike's vision and his presentation on the power of a teacher is the message we want our teachers to hear," says Linda Cline, Allen County's district assessment coordinator. "He doesn't just lead from the office level. He rolls up his sleeves every day and tries to make a difference in the lives of students."

Stevenson, though, seems to think that he and the Lost River teachers have only begun to make a difference. His latest strategy to improve reading instruction for struggling readers includes an outside reading coach. It is already paying off for Lost River's youngest students, the principal says.

"We believe you'll see the benefits (of this intervention program) in the coming years," Stevenson says. Which means Lost River should continue to be a school on the move.

Contact: Mike Stevenson at (270) 746-0034 or by e-mail at mstevenson@warren.k12.ky.us

(Don Sergent is the community relations specialist for Warren County Schools.)

Checkmate

Middletown Elementary students excel in chess — and academics — with winning moves

By Joy Barr
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

Middletown Elementary provides opportunities throughout the school day for all students to access a curriculum that is both rigorous and accelerated to prepare them for a challenging and bright future. Volunteers help support those efforts for high achievement at this Jefferson County school through an after-school chess team that gives students time to hone their critical-thinking skills.

Parents Chip Eskridge, Wade Shacklette and Roger Klingeman volunteer as coaches for the chess team. Klingeman also serves as webmaster for the team's Web site at www.middletownchess.com. The three coaches spend many hours working with students to help them learn and develop new chess moves.

More than 65 students, pre-K through 5th grade, belong to the team. Students at all skill levels meet most Monday and Tuesday evenings and after school on Fridays to learn the game and practice for tournaments. Eskridge said that chess tournaments in Kentucky regularly involve 20 to 30 elementary schools.

Eskridge and Shacklette attend every practice session, working with students to teach them the critical-thinking skills associated with chess. In addition, the coaches volunteer their time setting up tournaments and communicating with students and parents via e-mail.

The Middletown Elementary faculty has been very supportive of the chess team and its successes. Many of the students on the chess team are among the school's strongest academic performers.

The connection between chess and the classroom is quite evident. According to Eskridge, studies show that academically "average" students can excel at chess because it develops thinking skills, not just learning facts and figures.

"Our teachers have commented that when the weather prevents students from going outside, they choose to play chess. Parents say that the students would rather play chess than watch television," said Patricia Holladay, school principal. "Developing chess moves helps the children learn problem-solving strategies. Our chess students are often those who transfer their knowledge into mathematics and other subject areas."

Kristin Guelda, a primary teacher at Middletown, agrees. "My students who play chess take a step-by-step approach when problem-solving. They use higher-level skills and are methodical in their thought processes. Many apply the skills used in chess into their daily academic performance areas."

The U.S. Chess Federation says that youth membership has more than doubled since 2000, and sales of chess sets in the U.S. have increased steadily in the last five years.

In Kentucky, Eskridge says, some 50 to 60 schools have student chess programs. Chess is being used in schools throughout the nation to teach critical-thinking and strategy, mathematics, history and even English skills by having students write out their moves.

Brain researchers suggest that a game of chess can enhance the critical thinking skills of young students. Teachers sometimes use chess in the classroom as a learning tool to help build their students' thinking skills.

Some Kentucky schools have included board strategies as an elective in the curriculum. "It is dynamic problem-solving because there is immediate feedback. One thinks on their feet faster," said Eskridge.

"Chess is a really interesting game because it helps you think and stay focused for longer periods of time. It has really helped me do much better in my classes like science and math," said Alex Eskridge, a 5th grader whose father is one of the coaches. She learned the game from her dad and has played for several years.

Jace Russell, an 'alumnus' of Middletown Elementary and now a 6th grader at Crosby Middle, often helps with chess tournaments at the elementary school. He said the game of chess has helped him with problem-solving skills in mathematics.

"It makes me think harder and work smarter," said Jace. He credits his grandfather for teaching him the game, but many of his "chess skills" he attributes to his Middletown Elementary coaches.

Eskridge has been the chess coach for four years. "Chess helps people think on their feet. There is immediate feedback and individual accountability," said Eskridge. "Chess is a game where there is a progression of building skills. We try to provide an opportunity for every child to feel confident and to be a success."

"Our role as coaches is to provide instruction, encouragement and understanding," said Eskridge. Sportsmanship and respect for others are also emphasized.

That's not to say there aren't a few tears when a student loses a match. However, each child is encouraged to shake hands with their opponent before beginning, saying "Good Luck," and shaking hands at the end, saying "Good Match."

Allison Scheynost's fascination with the game began early in life. Her dad taught her the basics and she went to a chess camp. Allison, a 4th grader, is one of Middletown's strongest chess players. She thinks the game is "quite cool" and is very proud of the team.

For more information about Middletown Elementary's chess team, contact Chip Eskridge at (502) 649-3254 or send e-mail to chipeskridge@yahoo.com, or visit the team Web site.



Photo by Joy Barr

Fifth grader Zachary Hill makes a strategic move during a chess match at Middletown Elementary. Chess tournaments often involve competing teams from 20 to 30 elementary schools and offer opportunities for parent and teacher involvement in helping youngsters develop critical-thinking skills.

For more information about Middletown Elementary and its volunteer programs, contact Principal Patricia Holladay at (502) 485-8300 or send e-mail to phollad1@jefferson.k12.ky.us.

Playing chess provides benefits

- Chess is a game for people of all ages.
- Chess develops memory and improves concentration. During a match, the focus is on one main goal — to checkmate and become the victor.
- Chess develops logical thinking.
- Chess promotes imagination and creativity.
- Chess teaches independence.
- Chess develops the capability to predict and foresee consequences of actions.
- Chess inspires self-motivation. It encourages the search of the best move and the best plan out of endless possibilities.
- Chess shows that success rewards hard work. The more one practices, the better one becomes.
- Chess develops a scientific way of thinking. Decide on a hypothesis, make a move and test it.
- Chess involves an infinite number of calculations.
- Chess is a test of patience, nerves, will power and concentration.
- Chess improves schoolwork and grades. Studies show that student chess players obtain higher reading and mathematics levels, and a greater learning ability overall.

Source: Chip Eskridge, chess coach
Middletown Elementary School

One teacher's 'gifts' can make an enormous difference

By Mark Wasicsko

Eastern Kentucky University

In September 1960, I entered the 6th grade with a 1st-grade reading ability, low self-esteem and the idea that I just wanted to get by. Little could I have imagined that the teacher in whose charge I had landed would give me three gifts that would irrevocably alter my future.

Where would we be today if not for teachers who decided we were worthy of a significant investment of their time and effort? Was it fate, luck or destiny that placed us in their class and helped us become the people we are today? Because I was an "educationally challenged" youth, I ponder this often and constantly try to make payments on the debt I incurred so many years ago.

I and hundreds of other students were lucky to have had Margaret Aly as our 6th-grade teacher. Mrs. Aly stood 4 feet, 7 inches tall, walked with crutches and wore braces from the waist down due to a bout with childhood polio. But she never saw herself as handicapped in any way.

She had a rapier wit and a sharp tongue. When you were especially good, she would coo in French and — on those occasions when you pushed her patience — she would bark out orders in German. She was a verbal Zorro!

When students whose lives were transfigured by Mrs. Aly think of her, we remember things such as: she believed in us, made us feel worthwhile and had high expectations of us. She was honest, enthusiastic, had a great sense of humor and had an infectious excitement for the adventures of living and learning.

During my year in Mrs. Aly's class, I blossomed. I went from a student about whom my 4th-grade teacher said, "He will need to be cared for throughout his life," to a more confident person. I could read, control my behavior and was, as Mrs. Aly told my mother, "turning into a fine young gentleman."

The turning point in my school career happened around Christmas that year. Mrs. Aly encouraged us to prepare plays and skits to be part of a class party on the day before holiday break.

She was a "why not" teacher. If it wasn't illegal or immoral and wouldn't hurt anyone on the inside or out, she'd say, "why not, but tell me what you learned from it." She spooned out freedom and responsibility in equally plentiful doses.

Two friends and I, who were working our way UP the behavioral ladder to "class clowns," went to her. We proposed

a comic opera in which the Three Kings sang songs about exploding rubber cigars. She smiled a knowing smile and said, "Okay boys, why not."

Our performance was so bad that our friends were too embarrassed to look us in the eyes. After our escapade, I left school thinking I couldn't face Mrs. Aly or school ever again.

When the holiday was over, I dragged myself back to school and tried to slither unnoticed past Mrs. Aly who had eyes to cover every quadrant. "Mark, come here," she said.

Instead of the scorn I was sure I deserved, she said, "Give me a hug. I missed you. I have some new books for you."

Then and there I decided, "If Mrs. Aly believes I can do it, I WILL!"

The three gifts Mrs. Aly gave me played a major role in determining who I am and what I do to this day. The first was academic competence or more specifically literacy. Mrs. Aly quickly recognized that the core of my behavioral and academic problems was an inability to read. Instead of torment like I endured in my earlier years — "the reading (torture) circle," and innumerable demands to "sound it out" and "just look it up in the dictionary" (I spent eons looking for

words such as pneumonia) — Mrs. Aly never embarrassed me by demanding that I read aloud. Instead, she sent me to reading experts for intensive help or tracked down books of interest that were challenging but within my ability. That year I learned to read and, the summer after, I read my first book from cover to cover. "The First Boy on the Moon" sits today on the desk in my office at Eastern Kentucky University.

The second gift I received from Mrs. Aly was the understanding that I was not a "loser." She let me know that I was an able student, trustworthy friend and valuable person.

She empowered me with the realization that I can do almost anything that I am willing to work for. Little things she did built my confidence: she asked my opinion about things, listened to me, praised me in front of my parents, never did anything for me that I could do for myself, and held me accountable and to a high standard.

Her third gift was the power of a dream. Mrs. Aly would constantly ask, "If there were no limits, what would you be and do?" Like most boys in the infant years of space travel, I wanted to be an astronaut. She fed the dream with books, movies, magazines and liberal helpings of encouragement: "Astronauts must study

hard, read, do math and science, and get a college education. You can do these things if you try."

Her support and encouragement helped me graduate from high school, attend college and earn my family's first baccalaureate degree. I didn't become an astronaut — due in part to the fact that turning my head too quickly let alone spinning in space gives me vertigo. Rather, I became a teacher and then a teacher of teachers because of the power of the dream she inspired.

Years later, I asked Mrs. Aly why she singled me out and gave me such special attention. Always honest to a fault, she said, "I am sorry, Mark, but I don't remember doing anything special for you. I was doing my job the best I could and trying to repay a small portion of the debt I owed to all the people who invested in me."

Just imagine what could happen if we teachers intentionally choose a most needy student as the beneficiary of paying off our debt!

(Mark Wasicsko is dean of the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University. He has spent 25 years studying the dispositions of effective educators with particular emphasis on teacher selection and teacher preparation. Contact: mark.wasicsko@eku.edu, (859) 622-3515)



Central Elementary (Johnson County) teacher Leigh Ann Jeffers welcomes early primary student Chelsey Scott into "her space" to talk about a writing project. Kentucky teachers have the opportunity every day to invest in their students' success.

Photo by Rick McComb

NCLB from Page 1

and their parents have allowed the four schools to have a greater chance of helping students reach their maximum potential.

Central Elementary

This Johnson County school has worked hard to remove barriers of learning by creating trust among the students, staff, administrators and parents. Ben Hamilton is principal at the school of 370 students. By working together the faculty and students have demonstrated dramatic gains in student achievement. The school's 2003-2004 CATS accountability index is 111.8.

Hamilton attributes to the school's success to the mainstreaming of all special education students into the regular classroom all day. The special education teachers go into the regular classroom with the students to modify their lessons as necessary for student success.

Morgantown Elementary

There are approximately 700 students from preschool through 5th grade at this Butler County school. More than 63 percent of the students participate in the free- or reduced-price lunch program.

Despite such perceived barriers, the school has made great strides. Morgantown Elementary's 2003-2004 CATS accountability index is 89.7.

"The reason we were recognized as an outstanding school is largely a reflection of our school climate in terms of staff, students and parents all having high expectations of achievement," said Principal Greg Woodcock.

"There have been several groups of students over a period of years that have gotten us to where we are," said Woodcock. He attributes the school's success to several reading and mathematics programs that were implemented over the past few years. A hands-on approach to learning has helped make school fun and rewarding for students.

Morgantown students recognize that much is expected of them, and they strive to meet those expectations, Woodcock said. Teachers collaborate through team meetings to share ideas and strategies to ensure success.

Teachers constantly evaluate students to determine their needs, then modify instruction to meet those needs. They

use the same techniques across the board in an effort to create a better learning environment for students.

Sacramento Elementary

Sacramento Elementary, a small school with an enrollment of 120, was chosen for the NCLB Blue Ribbon School honor because of dramatically improving student performance on the state reading and mathematics assessments over the last three years. The school's accountability index is 88.8 for 2003-2004.

More than 40 percent of the students at this McLean County school are from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, principal Judith Walker

said the "family atmosphere" — created by teachers, parents and community members working with students — is a big reason for the school's success.

Teachers work in unity, helping one another and collaboratively looking for ways to improve student learning. Parent and community volunteers provide individual reading on a daily basis to all 1st graders and many first-year primary students.

Individual attention and the use of technology in small reading and mathematics groups has impacted the progress of the students, Walker said. The 4th and 5th graders meet with writing coaches twice a week for 45 minutes. Staff and volunteers use a variety of teaching strategies that specifically meet the individual needs of students at all levels.

West Louisville Elementary

West Louisville Elementary achieved NCLB Blue Ribbon status by scoring in the top 10 percent statewide in reading and mathematics on state assessments over a three-year period.

The school has 267 students and has a 2003-2004 accountability index of 109.7.

Principal Connie Morgan said, "The students at the school should be proud of the work they did to help earn this award. It also is a community award. We have hard-working staff and so many volunteers here to help us."



Morgantown Elementary second-year primary student Chase Miller raises his hand to answer to a spelling question from teacher Tonya Hampton.

Photos by Rick McComb



Central Elementary teacher Robin Mullins looks over first-year primary student Trent Vanover's shoulder as he completes a journal writing assignment.



West Louisville Elementary 4th grader MacKenzie Heifner gets an opportunity to review core content on lockers in several hallways that were painted by teacher Susan O'Bryan and students.



Teacher and writing coach Barbi Jagers listens to Sacramento Elementary students Aaron Foe, left, and Trevor Henderson talk about their writing during a regular weekly conference.

To learn more ...

If you'd like to learn more about the programs these NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools are using to improve teaching and learning, contact the school principals:

- Ben Hamilton at Central Elementary, (606) 789-2541, bhamilto@johnson.k12.ky.us
- Gregory Woodcock at Morgantown Elementary, (270) 526-3361, gwoodcock@butler.k12.ky.us
- Judith Walker at Sacramento Elementary, (270) 736-2343, jwalker@mclean.k12.ky.us
- Connie Morgan at West Louisville Elementary, (270) 852-7650, cmorgan@daviess.k12.ky.us

A complete list of this year's NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools is available at www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html.

More information about the NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools Program is available at www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html.

BOARD from Page 1

- folios and increasing the weight of on-demand writing. Weighting should be consistent with the vision for a school-wide writing program and the focus for instruction.
- Move on-demand writing out of the assessment window or place it at the beginning of the assessment window, but keep the length of the assessment consistent with current practice.
 - Create new performance standards to align with the new design of the writing assessment.
 - Consider regional scoring and school-based scoring by Kentucky teachers.
 - Consider holistic scoring and analytical scoring.
 - Explore the possibility of an on-demand writing assessment that combines reading and writing in a response to text format possibly at the 12th-grade level.
 - Expand the audit process to include instructional implications and consequences for teachers.
 - Maintain a working folder in primary with pieces analyzed and assessed at the classroom level for instructional

- purposes and student accountability. Continue the required working folder across the grade levels.
- Strengthen the code of ethics to target inappropriate practices at assessment.
 - Develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to professional development for teachers and instructional leaders. Focus on writing instruction partnerships.
- The board expects to make final policy decisions regarding Kentucky's writing assessment at its February meeting. Still being discussed are the accountability years, the number of entries in the writing portfolio at each level, how portfolios will be scored and the weight of the writing assessment components in the accountability index.
- The board is considering the following recommendations from the Department of Education:
- Administer writing portfolio assessment in grades 4, 7 and 12
 - Administer on-demand writing assessment in grades 5, 8 and 12 — On-demand at grade 5 would provide evidence

- of the independent writing skills of the student prior to transitioning to middle school. On-demand at grade 8 would provide evidence of independent writing skills of the student prior to transitioning to high school and at grade 12 would provide the rigor recommended by the American Diploma Project.
- Add a multiple-choice assessment at grade 10 to prepare students for ACT and post-secondary experiences
 - Require three entries in the elementary portfolio including one reflective, one literary/expressive and one transactive piece. No content area requirement
 - Require three entries in the middle-level portfolio including one reflective, one literary/expressive and one transactive piece. At least one content area requirement
 - Require four entries in the high school portfolio including one reflective, one literary/expressive and two transactive pieces. This should include at least one content area other than English/language arts elective or required

- courses, meaning one transactive piece should be analytical, technical or for the workplace.
- A modified analytical scoring method for scoring portfolios
 - An analytical scoring method for on-demand writing
 - Performance levels expanded from four to six
 - Continue scoring portfolios at the school level
 - Consider regional scoring of a sample of portfolios from each school to provide evidence of scoring accuracy and instructional analysis
 - Shift weighting of the writing components to 50/50 at all grade levels
- For more information about the rationale of the points of agreement and the pros and cons of the department's recommendations, go to www.education.ky.gov. Type "#kbewriting" in the search box. Click on Attachment A and Attachment B.
- The next meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education will be Feb. 2 and 3 in Frankfort.

STUDENTS from Page 1

Student organization members from Kentucky middle and high schools are working with elementary students on literacy skills during special events throughout the state. Middle and high school students are participating in the Unite to Read Certificate Program. This program encourages older students to read books and improve their literacy skills.

CTSO is comprised of these student organizations: Association of Marketing Students (DECA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), Association of Agriculture Students (FFA), Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), Industrial Technical Students Association (Skills USA), and Technology Student Association (TSA).

Last October, many of the student organizations partnered with Kentucky Educational Television to organize "Share a Story" events in their districts for elementary students and their parents. The older students worked with elementary-age students on reading skills by taking turns reading aloud to one another.

For the event, many groups planned entertainment and activities inspired by David Schwartz's book, "How Much is a Million?" In Anderson County and many other districts, each student received a copy of the book during the "Share a Story" night.

During the special literacy event at Anderson County, students did mathematics problems to help them understand the concept of 1 million and an estimation activity. They jumped through six hula hoops that signified the six zeros in 1 million. Parents and students received pack-

ets about the importance of reading.

Bowling Green High School students in a child development class organized a daytime reading event at Parker-Bennett-Curry Elementary. Activities at that school included a special lunch, a skit performed by the high school students and games inspired by Schwartz's book.

In addition to Share a Story events, the Rockcastle County Area Technology Center and High School career and technical education students created 150 literacy backpacks. Each backpack contains two books, classroom and home activities that relate to core content, puzzles, games and toys.

The backpacks are stored in each elementary school library on racks designed by welding students. Parents can check out the backpacks to use at home with their children.

During October, Rockcastle County Area Technology Center and High School students helped increase literacy awareness among parents of early readers. Once a week, students from participating organizations read to youngsters during Story Hour at the public library.

In addition to the Unite to Read Certificate Program, student organizations are creating ways to encourage older students to read. Each Friday at Grayson County Area Technical Center, the health science classroom becomes a coffee shop about 45 minutes before school begins. Nearly a dozen students regularly come early, have refreshments and read in the comfort of the reading lounge, said Cynthia Smith, DECA advisor/ATC director.

To learn more about what student organizations are doing with this literacy program, stop by the Unite to Read booth

in the STLP Showcase from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 4, or the Career and Technical Education Booth during the Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference in Louisville. Participation forms for next school year will be available at

the booth or can be obtained by contacting Nancy Graham, program consultant in the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Career and Technical Education, at (502) 564-3472 or by e-mail at ngraham@kde.state.ky.us.



Photo by Rick McComb

Life's only just begun

Carrie Ann Baxter, right, and Steven Francis Carr joined their wedding party at the receiving line to welcome friends and guests after they became "Mr. and Mrs. Portfolio" in a mock wedding ceremony at duPont Manual High School (Jefferson County). The bride and groom pledged to honor each other "until our portfolios are complete" for their Life Skills class taught by Mary Ann Plappert. In addition to planning and performing the wedding, students learned about renting an apartment, managing a household budget and other skills they will use as independent adults.

Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

194 Kentucky teachers receive their National Board Certification

One hundred ninety-four Kentucky teachers achieved certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards in 2004. Kentucky now has a total of 731 National Board Certified Teachers working in schools across the state. The state's goal is to have at least one National Board Certified Teacher in every public school by 2020.

Legislation passed by the 2000 General Assembly authorized teachers who achieve national certification to receive a \$2,000 annual salary supplement and a 75 percent reimbursement of their application fees. They also may be awarded Rank I certification by the Education Professional Standards Board. Some local districts may offer additional salary supplements or provide stipends to reimburse certification expenses.

Kentucky placed 12th among states in the number of teachers who received national certification during 2004.

Teachers generally spend a minimum of 300 hours completing the certification process while continuing to teach full-time. They are evaluated on content knowledge, effectiveness in teaching, and ability to manage and measure student learning.

Visit www.nbpts.org for more information about certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The Web site also offers a directory of all new and prior national certified teachers.

Financial aid available to help counselors pay certification tuition

The Kentucky Counseling Association (KCA) and participating colleges offer financial help to educators interested in taking summer courses toward certification as school or mental health counselors. These colleges and universities will provide one tuition waiver per teacher: Eastern Kentucky University, Lindsey Wilson College, University of Louisville, Morehead State University, Murray State University, Western Kentucky University and Xavier University (Ohio).

The state counseling association will provide up to \$100 per participant for books. Students beginning work on a master's degree will get preference for aid.

Each applicant must submit a completed application, documentation of acceptance by the participating university and a letter of recommendation. The submission deadline is April 15.

For more information and an appli-



Photo by Rick McComb

A hand of comfort

Deep Springs Elementary Principal Matt Thompson encourages a student who is having a bad day to follow the POW guidelines for success. Thompson initiated the POW (Principal's Outstanding Worker) program at the Fayette County school to recognize students who work toward success by always trying, being responsible, cooperating with others, doing their best and respecting everyone every day.

cation, visit www.kyca.org and click on "KCA Summer Scholarships."

Contact Bill Braden, KCA executive director, at 622 Timothy Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601, bradenkca@fewpb.net or phone (502) 223-5905.

KASA conference

Leading poverty expert and educator Ruby Payne will address the Kentucky Association of School Administrators at its 36th annual conference, July 13-15, at the Galt House in Louisville.

www.kasa.org

Updated Prichard Committee guidebook

A new version of "Kentucky School Updates: A Parent/Citizen Guide for 2004-2006," is now available from the Prichard Committee.

Designed to help parents stay current on education issues, the new update covers subjects from testing to school accountability to school-based decision making. It also offers new information on requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The document can be downloaded and copied from the publications

section of the Prichard Committee Web site at www.prichardcommittee.org.

Grants available to minority teachers

Tom Joyner, a nationally syndicated radio personality, and the National Education Association (NEA) are partnering to distribute more than \$700,000 to encourage minority teachers to complete their certification.

Information about the grant program and applications are available at www.nea.org/.

Public education report card on Web

"Quality Counts 2005," the ninth annual report card on public education in the United States, focuses on changing school finance systems and the growing push to link funding to student performance. The study by "Education Week" gave Kentucky an A for the quality and effectiveness of its testing program, but only a C for its financial commitment to education.

"Education Week" rated Kentucky's Commonwealth Accountability Test-

ing System (CATS) the ninth best in the nation. The journal also praised the use of open-ended essay questions on the assessment and the testing of students at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

To view the complete report, visit www.edweek.org/qc05.

KTLC 2005 offers special discount for school teams

The 27th Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference is set for March 3-5 at Louisville's International Convention Center. Preregistration discounts for individuals and school teams will be honored until Feb. 14.

The conference fee for the principal or assistant principal will be waived when a school team of five or more preregisters. For more information, visit the conference Web site at www.kentuckytlc.org.



Photo by Rick McComb

Gary Mahoney, a professor from Berea College and a designer and builder of guitars, shows students in the lutherie construction skills class a technique to form the body of a guitar.

Pulaski students explore the ‘sounds of science’

By Cathy Lindsey
clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

Why is a quarter-sawn red spruce soundboard best for a guitar? After a discussion about density, sound waves, strength-to-weight ratio, modulus of elasticity and appropriate grain numbers per inch, students in the Acoustic Alchemy Project at Pulaski County High School can tell you.

The lutherie construction skills class, created by mathematics teacher Wayne Craft, offers students the opportunity to learn and put into practice various science, mathematics and woodworking skills as they design and construct acoustic musical instruments.

“These students are learning content through a different style of instruction,” Craft said. “They learn content, enjoy, remember and have a product to show for it.”

Craft’s students built their own dulcimers and have begun work on guitars. Each student gets to keep one of the instruments. The other instrument will be sold by the school to raise money for continuation of the program.

According to Craft, the class provides rich hands-on experience in measurement, ratio and proportions, conversions and logarithms. Students must be able to take blueprints for an instru-

ment that are not full scale, scale them up and transfer the measurements for their work.

“This is a relatively easy theoretical concept,” Craft said, “but much harder to actually perform. Whether you’re a luthier building guitars or an architect designing buildings, the math is the same.”

During the fall semester, students spent part of their time in the classroom learning the theories and scaling up blueprints. They determined which supplies were appropriate for their project and developed a materials list.

The students then moved to the workshop to put the theories into practice. Supervised by agriculture construction skills teacher Greg Barron, the students used estimation skills to measure and cut the wood, and used logarithms to place the frets, all while learning to use both power and hand tools.

“It is one thing to be able to measure 29.725 inches with a ruler or caliper, but quite another to mark and cut this length from a piece of wood accurately and precisely,” Craft said. “The students have done a fantastic job with this — although many have experienced the agony of messing up a beautiful piece of curly maple.”

Craft believes the biggest benefit of this class is the problem-solving skills the students

acquire that can be applicable in many other situations. When faced with an obstacle such as miscalculating a measurement, students must figure out how to best salvage their product.

The Acoustic Alchemy Project also is promoting community involvement, according to Craft. Students are learning skills related to instrument building from luthiers in the community. This community involvement component incorporates guest speakers as well as instrument displays, presentations and performances at local festivals.

Craft, who was recognized as one of the nation’s most innovative educators in the 2004 ING Unsung Heroes Awards Program, spent many hours writing grants to fund this project. In addition to the ING Unsung Heroes grant, the school received a Toyota TIME grant, a Jordan

Fundamentals Grant, a Kentucky Arts Council grant and a Wal-Mart Foundation grant to fund the project. The students also raise money for the project by selling instruments they have crafted.

Since it is an elective class, priority registration is given to students with high Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) performances as well as those taking higher-level mathematics and science classes. Craft believes this gives students an incentive to aim high and do well on the state assessments.

Students will receive a geometry elective credit to add to the regular geometry credit required to take the class. They also receive an agriculture construction skills credit.

“I believe that you learn best by doing,” Craft said. “These students are making connec-

tions among math, science and construction skills. This deepens their understanding of all of these subjects.”

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Photo by Rick McComb

This guitar was designed and built by Gary Mahoney.



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